

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-9958
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THE OAU SUMMIT -- WHAT NOW?

ANNCR:

THE FIRST-EVER EMERGENCY OAU SUMMIT HAS ENDED WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE CRISIS IN ANGOLA. VOA CORRESPONDENT JOHN ROBERTS, WHO REPORTED SUMMIT DEVELOPMENTS FROM ADDIS ABABA, HAS THESE THOUGHTS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED, AND THE FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR ANGOLA.

VOICE:

THE CONFERENCE ENDED IN A COMPLETE DEADLOCK BETWEEN COUNTRIES WANTING RECOGNITION OF ONE OF THE THREE ANGOLAN FACTIONS, THE MPLA, AND THOSE FAVORING A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY FOR ANGOLA. NEITHER SIDE GOT WHAT IT WANTED, BUT FOR THAT REASON, BOTH COULD FIND REASONS FOR SATISFACTION AT THE OUTCOME ALTHOUGH THE MPLA PERHAPS LESS SO.

WHEN THE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS BEGAN PREPARING FOR THE SUMMIT, ONE WEEK AGO, IT WAS GENERALLY CONCEDED THAT THE MPLA WAS IN A VERY STRONG POSITION. IT HAD BEEN RECOGNIZED BY TWENTY-TWO AFRICAN NATIONS, AND NEEDED ONLY TWO MORE VOTES TO GAIN A SIMPLE VOTING MAJORITY. THERE WERE EXPECTATIONS THAT AN IMMEDIATE ATTEMPT TO SEAT THE MPLA AS THE GOVERNMENT OF ANGOLA WOULD SUCCEED.

ON THE OTHER SIDE, THE COALITION GOVERNMENT OF UNITA AND THE NATIONAL FRONT HAD NOT BEEN RECOGNIZED BY A SINGLE COUNTRY AND HAD BEEN BRANDED AS COLLABORATING WITH SOUTH AFRICA, ALTHOUGH BOTH GROUPS DENIED IT.

OBSERVERS IN ADDIS ABABA HAVE BEEN WONDERING WHAT HAPPENED TO TURN THE UNCOMMITTED NATIONS INTO A SOLID VOTING BLOC THAT EFFECTIVELY NEUTRALIZED THE PRO-MPLA SIDE AND HALTED

THE RECOGNITION DRIVE. WHILE IT PROBABLY WILL NEVER BE KNOWN EXACTLY WHAT WENT ON BEHIND THOSE CLOSED DOORS, ONE EXPLANATION MAY BE OFFERED. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE OTHER NATIONS AGREED WITH SENEGAL'S PRESIDENT LEOPOLD SENGHOR, WHO ARGUED THAT RECOGNITION OF THE MPLA WOULD BE FOR THE OAU TO IMPOSE A GOVERNMENT ON A PEOPLE, A FORM OF OUTSIDE INTERVENTION IN ITSELF.

IN ANY CASE, THE OAU WAS MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AN EMERGENCY SUMMIT OVER A UNIQUE HISTORICAL SITUATION. NO AFRICAN COUNTRY HAD EVER ACHIEVED INDEPENDENCE WITHOUT A SINGLE GROUP TO TAKE OVER THE HELM. AND, THE OAU HAD NEVER BEEN ASKED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN TWO OPPOSING GOVERNMENTS IN A SISTER STATE.

IF THE BACKGROUND OF THE SUMMIT WAS UNIQUE, SO WAS THE OUTCOME. THE AFRICAN LEADERS SIMPLY GAVE UP TRYING TO RECONCILE THE TWO SIDES AND WENT HOME WITHOUT ISSUING EVEN A FACE-SAVING RESOLUTION. NOW, THE ANGOLAN ISSUE REVERTS TO THE NINE-MAN BUREAU OF THE TWELFTH OAU SUMMIT TO DO WHAT IT CAN TO GET THE THREE SIDES TOGETHER AND REPORT TO THE NEXT SUMMIT. WITH THE MPLA SAYING IT WILL NEVER JOIN THE OTHER GROUPS, THE BUREAU IS NOT GIVEN MUCH CHANCE FOR SUCCESS. HOWEVER, THE ATTITUDES OF MEMBER NATIONS COULD CHANGE BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT SUMMIT TO THE EXTENT THAT THE DEADLOCK COULD BE BROKEN. THIS IS THE HOPE OF THE MPLA WHICH SAYS IT WILL GET MORE VOTES AND BE SEATED NEXT JULY.

IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE SOVIET UNION CAN BE CONVINCED THAT ITS ADVENTURE IN ANGOLA CANNOT SUCCEED WITHOUT SERIOUSLY THREATENING DETENTE WITH THE UNITED STATES.

IF SO, PERHAPS THE SOVIET UNION CAN PERSUADE THE MPLA TO COME TO THE BARGAINING TABLE.

SUGGESTIONS THAT THE ANGOLAN ISSUE BE TAKEN TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL HAVE MET WITH A COOL RECEPTION. IT IS FELT THAT THE SAME INTERNATIONAL RIVALRIES ALREADY AT WORK IN ANGOLA WOULD MAKE A VETO OF ANY RESOLUTION CERTAIN. THERE IS ALSO A RELUCTANCE TO AIR THE DIVISIONS AMONG AFRICAN NATIONS OVER ANGOLA IN AN INTERNATIONAL FORUM.

ANOTHER FACTOR THAT COULD INFLUENCE THE OAU IS A DECISIVE SHIFT IN THE MILITARY SITUATION ON THE GROUND IN ANGOLA. A CLEAR DOMINATING POSITION BY ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE OAU TO MAKE UP ITS MIND. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE CONFLICTING GREAT-POWER INTERESTS IN ANGOLA, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT EITHER SIDE COULD GAIN A MILITARY VICTORY OVER THE OTHER, AND A LONG, DRAWN-OUT STALEMATE WOULD RESULT. IN THAT EVENT, THE SITUATION COULD RESOLVE ITSELF IN TWO WAYS. EITHER ALL PARTIES FINALLY CONCEDE THAT A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY IS THE ONLY ANSWER, OR THE PRESENT DIVISION OF ANGOLA INTO THREE ZONES OF POWER COULD BECOME FROZEN, LEADING TO AN EVENTUAL DE FACTO PARTITION OF THE COUNTRY.

BEFORE LEAVING ADDIS ABABA, SEVERAL DELEGATES EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE OAU CAN FIND A WAY TO AVOID WHAT WOULD THEN BE ANOTHER UNIQUE DEVELOPMENT RELATED TO ANGOLA -- THE FIRST CHANGE IN THE BORDERS OF AN AFRICAN NATION SINCE THE INDEPENDENCE YEARS.

GH/PBM